

SENATOR CRAPO: Good morning again. And I again want to thank the President, Jim Connaughton and the Conservation Cabinet for their putting together of this great ambitious conference. And I want to thank all of you for your participation in this conference. I was reading the summaries of the breakout sessions and I was really impressed with the thinking and the ideas that are brought forth by all of you and which I think are going to help us make some significant progress.

I speak to you this morning as a member of Congress who has his own cooperative conservation projects and frankly also who has had the opportunity of carrying at least one of these major cooperative solutions through ratification by Congress. That was one that we handled in Idaho. Like you, I'm eager for what comes next including the possibility of new policy that fosters cooperation and to that end, I just want to offer a few thoughts to you.

The next panel you're going to see will represent the great strength of American conservation and that is the dominant role of federal laws and agencies. As we've seen at this conference however, much of the growth in conservation is coming from the personal commitment of citizens working together with each other and with the federal agencies. This development is only natural. A country that is governed by its people and for its people should go about conservation in the same way.

Like the founding of our government however, building cooperative conservation will take concerted political effort and policies that share responsibility for action. We have to unify to break gridlock because the law must adapt in order to make between ideas possible. As we innovate in the field, we must be able to legislate in Congress. In fact, I was thinking about this this morning and I thought we may need to have a conference on cooperative legislation so that we can achieve cooperative conservation.

The Endangered Species Act, I want to focus on a little bit today because it's a good example. Creative use of this law by federal agencies and private partners has produced successful cooperative ideas that need to become routine. The Act is now more than 30 years old and it was amended three times in the first 15 years of its existence. But new ideas and innovative solutions have not been incorporated into the Act since.

Amendments to the Act have improved it by creating experimental populations which have enabled highly successful reintroductions of wools into California,

California condors, whooping cranes and various fishes, habitat conservation plans which have secured binding commitments on more than 20 million acres of private land and others.

Since these updates, new and useful ideas over the last 17 years have been restricted primarily to policy changes which are more vulnerable to the routine litigation that face the Act. Some of these newer ideas include the Policy for Evaluation of Conservation efforts which promotes conservation before a species needs to be listed and which was proposed by the Clinton Administration and is finalized by the Bush Administration or the No Surprises policy which attempts to improve upon habitat conservation plans but has been struck down in court. This was also proposed by the Clinton Administration and recently has gained the attention of the Bush Administration.

These are just a couple bipartisan ideas and the number of bipartisan ideas that I can see in the summaries I read today was immense. The opportunities for improvement are significant.

And to help achieve cooperative legislation, Senator Blanch Lincoln from Arkansas and I have formed a bipartisan working group to coordinate with the Senate Environment Committee and the House Resources Committee. Our bipartisanship in Congress needs the support of collaboration among interest groups. The panel that just proceeded us was a gallery of the kinds of players that need to be a part of this effort, corporate citizens like International Paper that sponsor and lead such efforts as the Black Bear Conservation Committee, action groups like the Nature Conservancy with long experience on the ground that key to writing new and better law, advocacy groups like the National Wildlife Federation that can reach back to our conservation roots in active wildlife management, community groups like the Diablo Trust where new ideas are forged from necessity and tribal governments such as the Nisqually where passion and knowledge can lead to modern breakthroughs.

We have good ideas and long experience and a big part of what remains to be done is political. We must unify to overcome obstruction. Policy changes throughout conservation must identify and challenge the assumption that conservation is only the government's job. Aldo Leopold, the author of the first textbook on wildlife conservation and a leading conservation philosopher wrote 60 years ago "There's a clear tendency in American conservation to relegate to government all necessary jobs

that private landowners fail to perform. Government ownership, operation subsidy or regulation is now widely prevalent in forestry, range management, soil-watershed management, park and wilderness conservation, fisheries management and migratory bird management with more to come."

He did not disapprove. Nor do I. He did wonder however how conservation could grow if it was left to the government alone. He concluded and I agree that fully developed conservation requires the commitment of citizens especially landowners to adopt ethical obligations to do their part.

We've learned from our collaborations that a big part of this commitment is to find answers among ourselves so that government need not arbitrate all disputes. Consider that along with our liberty our land is central to what we share, to what defines us and what we enjoy or suffer according to our diligence in caring for it.

So the stakes are high, but we are up to it. I appreciate your commitment to this very important endeavor and I give you mine. Thank you very much.